



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



32ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, CYCLE A

Fr. David Rosenberg

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"...Therefore stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour." Matt 25:13

This week's parable of *"the Virgins and the bridegroom"* is the first of three we will hear as we move through these last three Sundays before Advent. All three parables make the point that *"the end time"* is coming and we must be prepared for it, though we know neither the day nor the hour.

The story of the wise and foolish virgins may be interpreted on more than one level. The simplest meaning, and probably the one most relevant to Jesus' historical situation, is that those who were in tune with the wisdom of God had *"ears to hear"* and accepted his message. Those who rejected it were lured to the material goods in the marketplace to find *"oil for their lamps,"* and rejected the spiritual illumination and the advice found in spiritual wisdom.

As applied to the Church at large and to individual members within the church, the parable is clearly a warning to live lives of watchfulness and prudent preparedness for our *"end times."* Such virtues are the result of careful attentiveness to the Word of God and to carrying it out in practice. We cannot, in other words, fall into spiritual slumber.

The *"foolish virgins"* possess a naïve and subtly manipulative and self-indulgent view of their life and what they perceive their family and community owe them. Their folly consists in a lack of interior self-knowledge. Spiritual union entails a spiritual maturity that has not been accepted, i.e. an encounter with Christ. In other words, one's unique personhood is ultimately responsible for maturing in one's own manifest wisdom that no one else but each individual can enter. We must take on, individually and with free will, our entry into the *"bridal suite"* of the sacred heart of Jesus. We will then, without conscious knowledge, fall on our knees, uttering the essential, *"Jesus, I love you with all my mind. All my heart. All my soul."* There is no one we can substitute to do this for us. We must seek the source of our own *"spiritual oil,"* and not expect to borrow it from someone else.

This week, let us reflect on the final verse, *"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."* Let us intentionally turn to the present moment. Let us find the courage to avoid the fate of the reckless virgins and use this moment to fill our lamps, distilled drop by drop with fidelity and devotion into the lamp of our heart. Then we can look forward with anticipation for that day when Jesus Christ will come as ardent Lover, seeking a pure oblation where His passion may eternally burn.

"May my prayer come before you, Lord. Incline your ear to my cry for help. Amen!" Ps.88

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

Jesus told his disciples this parable:

"The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins
who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Five of them were foolish and five were wise.

The foolish ones, when taking their lamps,
brought no oil with them,

but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps.

Since the bridegroom was long delayed,
they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

At midnight, there was a cry,

'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'

Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps.

The foolish ones said to the wise,

'Give us some of your oil,
for our lamps are going out.'

But the wise ones replied,

'No, for there may not be enough for us and you.

Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.'

While they went off to buy it,

the bridegroom came

and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him.

Then the door was locked.

Afterwards the other virgins came and said,

'Lord, Lord, open the door for us!'

But he said in reply,

'Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.'

Therefore, stay awake,

for you know neither the day nor the hour."

The Gospel of the Lord